

Life of the Spirit

A BLACKFRIARS REVIEW



Volume 1.

OCTOBER 1946

Number 4.

CONTENTS:

MEDITATION Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. 97

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAY
Conrad Pepler, O.P. 102

ROSARY SUNDAY Vincent McNabb, O.P. 105

CHRIST THE KING
Columba Cary-Elwes, O.S.B. 109

PSYCHOLOGY & RELIGIOUS VOCATION
'Medicus' 112

HOURS WITH ST. JEROME
Hugh Pope, O.P., D.S.S. 118

REVIEWS 123

BLACKFRIARS, ST. GILES, OXFORD

Price: One Shilling Monthly

Life of the Spirit

A review devoted to the theology and practice of prayer and the spiritual life, it is designed to assist in the re-establishment of the Catholic tradition of ascetical and mystical writing in the English language. Contributors are therefore encouraged to submit original MSS. or translations from the Fathers.

Literary Communications should be addressed to The Editor,

Life of the Spirit,
Blackfriars,

Oxford (Tel. 3607).

The Editor cannot be responsible for the loss of MSS. submitted; and no MS. will be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Communications regarding Advertisements should be addressed to The Manager at the above address.

Subscriptions and Orders should also be sent to The Manager, Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford (Tel. 3607). Annual Subscription 12/6 post free (U.S.A. \$3.00).

Life of the Spirit

Vol. I

OCTOBER 1946

No. 4

MEDITATION

By

FERDINAND VALENTINE, O.P.

IN addition to the kind of mental prayer we have already considered, there is another which usually goes by the name of Meditation. We have already spoken of vocal prayers in which set words precede and circumscribe the thought. In the mental prayer called Meditation on the other hand it is the thought which precedes and elicits the words or spontaneous acts. There is sufficient truth in the aphorism 'Vocal prayer is meaning what we say, but meditation is saying what we mean' to distinguish between these approaches.

In general, we may say of meditation that the closer the soul draws to God through habitual collaboration with his Will, the more ardently will it desire God in time of prayer and the less will it rely on preliminary meditation. This need for meditation varies also with disposition, temperament and many other factors. St Teresa of Avila, for instance, found great difficulty in collecting her thoughts and for many years used a book to start her prayer. 'I could not meditate without a book', she says. 'This does not mean she made formal meditation. She goes on to say: 'There are many people of this kind, and others cannot meditate even with the help of reading, but are obliged to recite vocal prayers, which to a certain extent arrest their attention. Some have so volatile an imagination that they cannot fix their thoughts, which are always wandering, upon one thing; if they try to think of God, they are troubled with a thousand foolish fancies, scruples and doubts' (*The Way of Perfection* 17 :2, cf. *Life* 9 :6.) In another place she says: 'The words of the Gospel always led me to recollection better than any other works' (*Way of Perfection* 22).

Perhaps the most helpful definition of Meditation is that given by St Francis of Sales: 'When we think of divine things, not to learn, but to make ourselves love them, this is called meditation, and this exercise Meditation' (*Treatise on the Love of God*, 4:2.)

But he goes on to explain: 'Many persons are always dreaming, and engaged in unprofitable thoughts, almost without knowing what they are thinking about; and, which is noteworthy, they are only attentive to these thoughts inadvertently, and would wish not to have them; witness him who said: "My thoughts are dis-

sipated, tormenting my heart" (Job 17:11): many also study, and by a most laborious occupation fill themselves with vanity, not being able to resist curiosity: but there are few who meditate to inflame their heart with holy heavenly love. In fine, thoughts and study may be upon any subject, but meditation, in our present sense, has reference only to those objects whose consideration tends to make us good and devout. So that meditation is no other thing than an attentive thought, voluntarily reiterated or entertained in the mind, to excite the will to holy and salutary affections and resolutions' (*Ibid.*)

Such meditation is not only the immediate preparation for one kind of mental prayer which goes by the same name 'Meditation'; it is also, generally speaking—that is, outside the specified time of prayer—the application of our practical intelligence to God's revelation with a view to the practice of virtue. We cannot love what we do not know: meditation is learning, ruminating upon, reflecting upon God and divine things, that we may be roused to his loving service; it is 'chewing the cud' of divine things in God's presence as we go through our day.

Meditation, as the immediate preliminary of mental prayer, may be defined as a mental process by which the intellect, applying itself to some particular subject-matter appertaining to God and the spiritual life, passes from one consideration to another.

This mental process or *discursus* is twofold:

(1) *Properly-so-called* by which the intellect extracts or logically deduces one consideration from another. For example:

Our Lady gave birth to a child—Jesus Christ who is God and man.

She is therefore the Mother of God.

God seeks rest and shelter in the arms of his Mother.

She is the Mother, too, of the sacred Humanity.

This baby in her arms will be washed, fed, moulded in character by its Mother.

The personality of Mary was in fact impressed upon the sacred Humanity; and many of our Lord's fine human qualities shown forth in the Gospel narrative were the reflected characteristics of his Mother.

The woman at the edge of the crowd voiced this truth: 'Blessed is the womb that bore thee', she cried, 'and the breasts that suckled thee'.—You had a wonderful Mother!

Such a *discursus* is Meditation properly-so-called or *formal*.

(2) A *discursus* or discourse *not-properly-so-called* by which the intellect forms one consideration after another regardless of strict logical sequence. What Father Vincent McNabb calls 'loitering amidst divine realities and principles', wandering now here, now there, in astonishment at the magnificence of God's world or our blessed Lord's Incarnation. This is often called *Informal Medi-*

tation. It is what others, for example St Bernard, would call pondering the word of God with prayerful relish.

At the conclusion of an article in which he discusses whether the ceremonial observances in the Old Testament—Deuteronomy 14 (cf. v. 7)—are reasonable, St Thomas writes: 'The animal that chews the cud and has a divided hoof, is clean in signification. Because division of the hoof is a figure of the two Testaments. . . . While chewing the cud signifies meditation on the Scriptures and a sound understanding thereof; and whoever lacks either of these is spiritually unclean' (S.T. 1-2; 102:6.)

And again, St Augustine: 'We exhort you, beloved, that what by hearing you store, so to speak, in the stomach of your memory, that by again revolving and meditating, you in a manner ruminate' (*In Ps. CXXI.*)

Some idea of the extent to which the Saints ruminated upon the Word of God may be gathered from their writings. One is often puzzled to find that busy men like St Francis of Sales, St Bernard and St Augustine had such a grasp of Scripture. Their quotations are apposite and they have a genius for revealing at a stroke unexpected and fascinating depths of spiritual meaning.

The secret of this knowledge is passed on to us by Cassian, who was the 'Father of Saints', and whose Conferences were the spiritual food of the early Middle Ages. He writes in his XIVth Conference: 'We must read unremittingly and commit the holy Scriptures to memory. This continual meditation will produce a double fruit. First of all, when our minds are occupied with these holy readings, they will necessarily be freed from all bad thoughts; and secondly, if while labouring to learn the Scriptures off by heart, we do not always understand them, later on, when disengaged from exterior things we meditate upon them in the silence of the night, we shall penetrate into them more deeply, and discover hidden meanings that we had not been able to grasp during the day, and that God reveals even sometimes during sleep.

'When this study has renewed our heart, the holy Scripture will appear to us under quite a new aspect, and its beauty will go on increasing in proportion as we make progress; for the holy Scripture is understood by each according to his dispositions. It seems earthly to the carnal, and divine to the spiritual; so that they who at first saw it enveloped only in profound obscurity cannot afterwards sufficiently admire its splendour, nor bear, undazzled, its great light' (Chaps. X & XI.)

Thomas Vallgornera, O.P., describes this rumination under another figure. 'Meditation', he writes, 'is like the bodily eye which moves up and down, and left to right. So the mind's eye in meditation moves this way and that; sometimes to look upwards to God and eternal things, sometimes downwards to death, hell, pain and punishment, sometimes to the right and the things to be done, sometimes to the left and the things to be avoided' (*Mystica*

Theologica Divi Thomæ: Disp. 6. Art. 1). Vallgornera seems to have in mind the phrase of Isaias: 'Meditabor ut columba' (cf. 38:14).

* * * *

Meditation is necessary for all. St Thomas shows this clearly in many places. (cf. the *Summa Theologica*: Part I. Q. 84 a. 7; Q. 85 a. 1; Q. 87 a. 2 2nd obj.; Q. 88 a. 1. 2. 3; 2-2 Q. 82 a. 3; 2-2. Q. 180 a. 4).

St Augustine commenting on *Psalms* 38 v. 4: 'My heart grew hot within me: and in my meditation a fire shall flame out', says that 'prayer is tepid until it is heated by meditation'. And St Jerome calls Meditation, 'the sister of reading, the nurse of prayer, and the directress of one's work' (*Soror lectionis, nutrix orationis, directrix operis.*)

Meditation, therefore, as a mental process in some way preparatory to prayer, is necessary for all.

As we have seen, the word itself is ambiguous: strictly speaking, it means the mental process which disposes the soul proximately or remotely for prayer; it is thinking about God for the purpose of loving him. But sometimes the word meditation is used to describe the whole exercise of that kind of mental prayer which begins with meditation as a means to discursive acts.

Taking Meditation in the former sense, all seem to be agreed that it is necessary. Differences of opinion arise only on the question whether in practice it should be the *immediate* or the *remote* preparation for prayer. This is, of course, in no way a dichotomous division—that is to say, it is not either one or the other. There are many intermediary stages. But the question to be decided is this: generally speaking, in which direction should the emphasis lie? In other words, when I kneel down to pray in the morning should I prepare myself by formal and fixed points of meditation or even by informal meditation; or is it enough (or preferable) to make this meditation at some other time, in the form of prayerful spiritual reading, and to use a simple, direct approach to God in time of prayer?

Before discussing this problem more objectively it is vital to point out that there are, for or against, what might almost be called schools of thought, centering round various religious orders. A steadying factor, however, is the knowledge that the rules and constitutions of these orders have been approved by the Church, and, faithfully observed, are an infallible means to personal sanctification. Although we may hold, therefore, that a particular approach to prayer is best in itself, it is impossible to deny that other approaches may be better in certain definite circumstances of life. There are exceptions, but we have in mind chiefly the normal, average religious. It is quite wrong and sometimes mischievous for religious, inside or outside such groupings, to try and change the spirit and tradition of an order.

It is not difficult to see the wisdom of the Church in this matter. Take, for instance, the congregations of Teaching Religious, Brothers and Sisters, whose time is spent for the most part supervising the secular education of children. We have to admit that their lives lack the homogeneity which characterises the more monastic institutions. Teaching Religious are not called upon to live what they teach. They are not by vocation theologians or lecturers in ascetics, nor do they live round the *Opus Dei*. They are concerned with Geography, Algebra, Literature, Science and preparing youthful minds for immediate, urgent examinations. It is only to be expected that time should be set aside in such harassing conditions of life for deliberate mental readjustment, safeguarded by formal meditation. Harm may be done by discouraging strict, formal meditation when by rule religious are not given, apart from this, adequate time or opportunity for spiritual reading. They are more likely indirectly to conserve the spirit of prayer through formal meditation, even though it never become more than a careful and relished spiritual reading, than would be the case if they applied themselves to a simpler approach to prayer to the total neglect of spiritual study. Nevertheless, formal meditation, like spiritual reading, should be ordered to prayer, and if *de facto* it is not, then some other time should be set aside for prayer.

Two suggestions follow from these remarks:

(1) Where formal meditation is obligatory, a simpler and more direct approach to God should be encouraged at some other convenient time. This is seldom difficult, opportunity usually being provided by rule. As there are many degrees of insistence on formal meditation, ranging from a rigid adherence to a set, traditional form, to the 'points-if-you-need-them' method, this suggestion must remain elastic.

(2) Some religious rules provide only a short period, outside morning and evening meditation, for spiritual reading. In these circumstances, if formal meditation is not of obligation it should only be discarded after a corresponding individual insistence on spiritual reading as remote preparation for prayer.

THE BEGINNING OF THE WAY

By

CONRAD PEPLER, O.P.

I—PIERS PLOWMAN.

If there be any need to defend the introduction of William Langland into a treatise on English mysticism and the spiritual life we may refer the reader to Christopher Dawson's brilliant essay in *The English Way*. 'This popular tradition of English religion', he writes of Fox, Bunyan and Blake, 'which was divorced from Catholic unity and even from the national unity after the 17th century already exists in its purest and most unadulterated form

in the work of Langland. He shows us what English religion might have been if it had not been broken by schism and narrowed by sectarianism and heresy'. And again: 'Langland embodies the spiritual unity of the English people at the very moment when religion in England stood at the parting of the ways'. *Piers Plowman*, the virile and powerful poem of the English people, provides a solid basis for a truly English type of spirituality. The whole purpose of the work is to show the men of this country how they may save their souls; it describes the nature of the Good Life for the ordinary man and at the same time searches for an answer to the general theological question: how can men win salvation? He describes a world of sin and degradation, the lowest rung in the scale of humanity, from which the well-intentioned men of the land will, by the grace of God, raise themselves to live a life of a spiritual character based on Truth and Love. He points out the vices, difficulties and dangers that strew the path of ascent, and also the virtues and gifts required to surmount these impediments.

This would provide ample justification for including *Piers Plowman* in this study, but there is more to it than that. A close examination of the structure of the poem reveals that it is a practical application of the traditional division of human life into *incipientes, proficientes et perfecti*.¹ There is first a long introduction on the world and its needs: this occupies seven of the twenty *Passus*. But then the poet begins to discuss, amid the prolific growth of his allegory and symbolism, the nature of the three types of life: DO WELL, DO BETTER, and DO BEST. This discussion occupies the remaining three sections of the book. We may therefore summarize the Vision thus: Sin, Conversion and Entry into the first of the Three Lives or Ways. This section is divided accordingly.

II—SIN.

William Langland was a contemporary of Geoffrey Chaucer. But the two stand in strong contrast. Chaucer was the pioneer and chief of the movement to anglicise the continental, and in particular the French, tradition of the nobility with all its cultured classicism. Langland represents the English tradition, the English view of life. This had been handed down to him from his own people who had been serfs for three hundred years, from the early northern poetry, the pure and refined Anglo-Saxon literature. He was born in all probability in the West Country under the Malvern

¹The three stages or lives are outlined in *Passus* ix, 224 (p. 111).

NOTE: All references are to the modernised version: *The Vision of Piers Plowman by William Langland newly rendered into English by Henry W. Wills* (London, Sheed and Ward, 1938). This edition has the advantage, for our purposes, of being easily readable without losing too much of the power of the original, and also of combining the variant versions so that confusion in reference is avoided.

Hills, perhaps even 'On a May morning on a Malvern hillside', where his first vision is described (*Induction*, 5). He appears to have been the bastard son of a local squire who had him taught in the traditional clerical style:

My father and my friends furnished my schooling,
Till I was trained truly in the doctrine of Scripture,
In what is best for the body, -as the Book tells us,
And safest for the soul. (*Passus* v, 37-40).

With this knowledge he was able to become a bedesman, living in a cottage on Cornhill in London with his daughter and his wife, who provided him with much bitterness. As a clerk in minor Orders with 'My seven psalms and sometimes my psalter', he earned a meagre pittance singing in chantries and reciting prayers for patrons (cf. the first part of *Passus* v). He suffered from poverty and ill health,

Yet by my faith, I never found, since my friends perished,
Any life that I liked out of these long garments.
(*Passus* v, 41-42).

Thus he combined the life of an ecclesiastic and a married layman, of the town and of the country, of well-to-do stock and of actual poverty. With so many strands meeting in him he might well provide a general example of Christian living; but at first he led a dissolute life, wasting his time in the distractions of the city. And when he came to plan this great work his object was to find his own way back to salvation and to lead others from the same irregular life where they . . . loved good living,

And to do nothing but to dine, to drink and to sleep.
(*Passus* v, 8, 9).

It was not merely his own sins from which he wished to escape, but from the sins of the society in which he lived. The poem is a protest against the recent introduction of money power into the social scheme of his day. Lady Meed who typifies the power of finance appears as the actual ruler of both Church and State, and against her the poet wages a bitter war. Lady Meed finds a friar to confess her, 'to be her bedesman and her brother also', as she pays for a new window and has her name glazed therein (*Passus* iii, 40 and cf. the whole). Falsehood, Guile, the Liar and many other rascals are employed by officialdom to preserve their own *status quo*. Some of Langland's phrases have been echoed in our own day by Chesterton and Belloc.

Since soap-makers and their sons have knighthood for silver
(*Passus* v, 76).

And the reform that he calls for is consequently not isolated 'morals' but includes an economic reform such as the modern Distributists demand. (cf. *Passus* vi, particularly 1-21, 38sq., 188sq. and vii, 25-38). The power of finance must be broken if conscience is to have an honest chance of living and converting the souls of many. Evidently, and it is clear from the last part of

Passus VII, a natural economic solution is not sufficient. These economic evils spring first from original sin, and, for a real regeneration of society, grace, the free gift of God, must renew the face of the earth. Distributism without the Faith would fail, not because it is a wrong solution, but because without supernatural aid men would not have the power to put it into effect. Langland, then, offers no mere economic or political remedy for these social evils. Society for him requires a spiritual reform based on supernatural justice and charity. Christendom, the unity of the Church, this is the only radical cure. It is therefore useless to discuss, with any practical end in view, the upper stories of the spiritual life until we have made sure of a firm foundation in the right attitude to society—the war profiteer cannot expect to reach to the mystic life of union. The individual is not an isolated unit. He is born into society, a member of society, responsible to and for society. At this stage it would be easy to over-emphasise a high-and-dry contact between the soul and God, the soul as it were abstracted from its surroundings. Not only are the actual sins of the individual, against the background of his share in original sin, pertinent at the time of conversion. The spiritual life is not an escape from the harshness of the world. There are too many who flee to the pews of their churches, spending long hours in prayer and refusing to admit their implication in the wars and strikes, the injustices and uncharities of the society of which they are members. It is not a question of actual sin. But our Lord with no sin at all on his conscience went through every imaginable purgation for the sins of the whole human society of which he was born a member. The individual Christian cannot refuse this same responsibility for the sins of his world. The lives of the saints reveal a very deep and sensitive consciousness of responsibility for the evils of their times. The way to holiness does not lie in a vacuum. Langland therefore calls for an ascetic recreation of life in society based on the Christian virtues of individuals.

But there is a sort of despair in the concluding stages of the poem, a despair of achieving any active conversion of society. He eventually visualises a mystic, passive purgation by all the powers of evil let loose on men. The hordes of hell have been unleashed over the face of the earth and appear to be gaining the victory.

... in a man's likeness

Antichrist came against all the crop of Truth,

Dashed it to earth, and turned the roots upward.

Falsehood sprang and spread and sped men's wishes.

In each country where he came he cut Truth down.

(cf. *Passus* xx, 50-80.)

But Langland's prophetic eyes pierced that apocalyptic gloom, which is almost darker today than at his own time, and, in common with many writers of that era, he foresees a future

resurrection of society in the power of the New Spirit.

One Christian king shall keep the earth.

Mede shall no more be the master, as at present,

But love and lowliness and loyalty shall together

Be masters of mankind and maintain Truth . . . etc.

But before this fortune befall men they shall find the worst.

(*Passus III*, 406-455.)

In an evil age Mechtilde of Magdeburg and Joachim of Flora had prophesied a new era of grace. The followers of Joachim, indeed, the spiritual Franciscans, had been led by the prophecy into excesses and even heresy. But every age has its evils and it is useless to look forward to future betterment, trusting in politicians and plans, unless each individual is prepared to shoulder the responsibility of these very evils and so enter into the cell of self-knowledge and being thus converted help, by a holy life, in the salvation of the people.

ROSARY SUNDAY

BY

VINCENT McNABB, O.P.

The Holy Gospel according to St Matthew, chapter 22

‘. . . And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, “What think ye of Christ: whose son is he?” They say to him, “David’s”.’

I HAVE to speak to you tonight about the holy Rosary. There are, of course, ten thousand things to be said about it, the least of which is a glorious battle on which probably depended the civilisation of the world; but I am going to allow a little child to lead me and you into the Rosary.

There are not many trees in London streets, but there are a great number of children—better than trees of course—and God, in his goodness, often allows little children to hail me. The other day I was passing through one of our streets, close at hand, made beautiful with the feet of little children and their gambols, and two little ones I found suddenly by my side. I think they must have crossed the little narrow street; I don’t know. I only know that suddenly I found two little ones by my side. I think their aggregate age would be about six. I imagine the lesser of the two was not quite two and he had towards the elder one that natural sense of guidance which of course might be the salvation of a world in ruins. But the elder of the two began, as so many children have done before, and I hope will do again, began to search at my Rosary-side for my beads.

(I shall never forget till I die, the first time I went out to Regent’s Park on Good Friday to read out the death of Jesus. There was no one there when I began, but soon there was a little child toying with my beads.)

So the little man the other day began searching for my beads that were hidden beneath my cloak and scapular. I took the beads out, but then he darted to that (the crucifix). It was not just the beads he wanted: it was that; and he said firmly and hastily—as I imagine in the olden days men said the *Credo* when they were going to be martyred—he said to me, to himself, and to the little one, 'That is God: kiss him'.

That is God: Kiss him! Did you ever hear anything like that? No wonder that our blessed Lord says 'from the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise'. (*Mat.* 21:16.) Not even St Thomas Aquinas in his higher flights of accuracy could have said it in the *Tantum Ergo*. He has not said it in the *Adoro te devote*; but it was said here by a child. 'That is God: Kiss him'. It was not idolatry: the child knew it was an image. No doubt when he went home and saw some picture of his father or his mother he would say: 'That is Father: That is Mother'. 'That is God: Kiss him'.

So he kissed him, and I kissed him, and then he turned round to the little one that was just startled by the accost, and the little one was so small that he could not quite reach up to the cross at my belt, so I knelt down in the London streets when a small London child kissed God. It is worth while having a Rosary at your belt when that great thing can be wrought in the streets of London.

London is not Whitehall. London is not the Universe. That is London, or London is dead.

'What think ye of Christ?' 'God', said the little one. That is what they should have said when Jesus asked them, putting almost the answer into their mouth: 'What think ye of Christ, whose son is he,' He never said that to Peter, when Peter came and said, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God'. But of course not flesh and blood had revealed it to Peter but his Father in Heaven—and our dear Lord almost put the answer in their mouth, 'What do you think, whose son is he?' They answered smartly with an historical answer. They were quite acquainted with the history of their own nation, and when men have given up profound thinking they seek for culture in history—in data.

It was true but not sufficient, and when something is true and not sufficient you are wrong if you think it is sufficient. He was David's son, but he was also the Son of God. Sometimes I go to speak of the Son of God to some of those, his brethren according to the flesh, and they will hardly even confess that he is the son of David. They will say that he is almost a child of sin—of *sin*—and they don't know that in saying that they are making their own race outcast in the whole world; for if he is a child of sin and not the child of God, then the Hebrew people have committed the world's greatest crime, for Jesus Christ the Son of God is either the greatest glory of Israel or their greatest shame. Every

one that took him out into the world was of that race. Peter and James and John and Paul—they were all of that race, and if that race, knowing they took out into the world a child of sin, a man that was not God, knowingly—then they should be suspected for the rest of time. No crime has ever been committed like that; but, of course, we who are the true Jews, we hold that this thing in our hands which seems a kind of shame is the greatest glory of the chosen people.

Ah! dear children, it is only in the home of Peter, where Jesus dwelt, that you have a full confession that Jesus Christ is not only son of David, but Son of God. Do you think the son of David would ever have redeemed the world? David's victories were those of the battlefield. David with his own smooth pebbles from the brook, and, alas! with Goliath's sword, slew Goliath. David the great conqueror and the adulterer, could only bring still greater ruin in the world, and the Redeemer had to be of the stock of David to cleanse it, but of the stock of God to redeem it.

Now, dear brethren, that little child's accurate statement of what the Rosary is might almost shock the modern mind even in this land—for we are commemorating today a victory on sea which was achieved in the councils of God, through this great prayer of the divinity of Christ. In 1571, when Protestantism had as it were finally fixed its frontiers in Europe, it was necessary to save the world. Protestantism could not save it. There were many well-intentioned persons within the frontiers of those sects, but in point of fact they had really given up the divinity of Jesus Christ, because they had given up the divinity of his great work, the Church. God's work stands: Man's work falls. But when they gave up the idea of a great visible church with authority, they had implicitly given up the child's answer: 'That is God', and it has now taken some 300 years (getting on for 400 years) to work that out to its uttermost conclusions, and it is a very sad thing to see that the conclusions are being worked out almost on a world-wide scale. They are invading us in almost every sphere of life; they meet us at every turn of the street. Perhaps in a few years that little one that has made a most glorious confession of faith will be blaspheming, will be caught up into the current of denial and will think that the Bride of Christ is some harlot set up by the pride or the ignorance or the ambition of man.

But whilst the Rosary is used in the Catholic Church, there will be taught throughout it that that is God. God came our way. The Good Samaritan was none other than the Son of God, equal with the Father, eternal in his begetting, his divine begetting; and this child of Bethlehem and Nazareth was God's eternal Son.

With what different eyes, then, we shall look out on the world, if we carry this thing about us! This school of learning—this university of all sound teaching. What is there that this does not teach you? Its Joyful Mysteries will teach you to prepare for life.

which really means this, that if you teach us to pray right, prayer will teach us all that is worth learning: and in the five Joyful Mysteries you will be taught the value of life and how to prepare for it. You will be taken to the little home at Nazareth and you will see one of the least of the little highland maidens, and you will see a glorious saint and an ambassador from God. The enlightened 'minds' think it a very little thing, but God's ambassadors come today and tell us that in its relation to the divine life it is a very great thing.

Then you will be taught about suffering and sorrow. What does the world—the modern world—know about suffering and sorrow? In its anxiety to end it, it is increasing it. The modern world, poor bewildered thing, on which I have great compassion, seeing suffering round about does nothing better really than try to hack its way out. It does not understand it, it creates it: but when Jesus came into the world he added sorrow to no one. He dried tears, and though most graciously he says that he came not to send peace but the sword, it was not his sword, it was theirs. They drew out the sword and he most courteously seemed to accept the responsibility almost of their sin. So that it will teach you all about sorrow and he, as the holy man says, he that has not suffered, what does he know?

But it will not end with suffering, just as Calvary does not finish on Good Friday. The Calvary that is enshrined in our souls as we say these beads is the Calvary of Easter morning, when tears are wiped from eyes and sorrow and sin are no more, and I will not say, that the earth is smiling with a mere earthly smile—the smile that was on the summer sea and the morning hills, and the dew-impearl'd leaf of grass; but with this smile of Heaven, redolent of Paradise—with Heaven's smile because God has come into our midst.

I hardly dare do what the little one asked me to do, and yet I think—as a child shall lead us both—I think I shall make profession of faith that if my God has come into this world so full of love to me that he has cleansed my feet with his kisses, wiped them with the tresses of his head, and if I may use that sacred word made more sacred by the lips—the innocent lips—of the little child: 'That is my God and I will kiss him!'

(Rosary Sunday, 1933.)

CHRIST THE KING

By

COLUMBA CARY-ELWES, O.S.B.

WE know Christ was to have been a king, because for one thing he was to sit on the throne of David his father. Pilate, when he said provokingly, 'Art thou a king then?' spoke more truly than he was aware. The populace that haunted Jesus's footsteps, that followed, followed for the sake of a miracle, it too was convinced that Jesus was the king who was to come. On one occasion they went so far as to attempt force in order to have their way with him; but he fled to the mountains alone.

It was certainly this riotous and revolutionary attitude of the crowd that made our Lord, not disown the title, but avoid it. Nevertheless on two great occasions he bore it publicly, and once he suffered it, when mockingly acknowledged, in silence.

The first occasion was Palm Sunday. Of all the scenes in the New Testament, that is one of the most strange. Christ had implied he would not go up to Jerusalem at that time, but he had gone up alone. The ferment of excitement was such in his regard, and the fear of tumult so great, that he lived on the hill to the East in the little village just over the crest, the village of Bethany. It was Jesus's great endeavour to say all he had to say, yet keep the people from rising against their masters, Roman or Pharisee, in violent fashion. The one thing, you would think, that he wanted to avoid was a public demonstration. Yet was he not a king, and had he not a right and a duty to fulfil the ancient prophecies? He was King of the Jews and of their capital city, the City of God. So, once, he allowed the people their way, he even cooperated by riding upon an ass, a royal mount in the East; he allowed the wildly exultant men and women to cry out 'Hosanna to the Son of David, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest' (*Matt.* 21:9). For the prophet had said, 'Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek and sitting upon an ass . . .' (*Isaiah* 62:11). The wonder and mystery is that this demonstration on the large scale, this moment the populace had been waiting for, did not develop in the way they wanted, or hoped; Christ did not give the signal for falling upon the Roman soldiers. The whole affair subsided, died away. A week later these same people were winding along in another procession, perhaps bewildered, more likely vindictive, and considering the end a fitting one for a man who seemed to have the whole world at his feet and had refused it. They did not know that such a kingdom Jesus had refused right at the beginning of his public life, when Satan took him to the top of a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the

earth; and he had refused to worship Leviathan instead of God. King he was, but not a king after the heart of the Jews, nor after the heart of many of us for the matter of that.

The next scene in which the kingship of Christ comes is the night before his death after the Jews have handed him over to Pilate. We are allowed to witness one of the cruellest scenes in history. Some Roman soldiers (who knows, they may have been our own ancestors?) dressed him up as a king in purple robe and head crowned, sceptre in hand. Then they did mock obeisance. But to show their contempt more clearly, in case he who could read all hearts might be deceived into thinking they really meant their homage, they spat in his face and clouted him over the head, and snatching the sceptre they beat his crown with it, so that the jewels in this strange crown, the thorns, should penetrate the skull.

We are like the thoughtless crowd, we imagine we know of what world our Lord is King, we gather round and shout and sing, pride ourselves that we are in the stream. Then, maybe like them, we suddenly come to a halt and in a flash know that this procession is not going to the imperial palace, but to the crucifixion. Sometimes we are openly hostile, and knowing right well that we hate this kind of kingship, we deride it, we demonstrate against it. But Christ remains silent and forgiving.

Yet Christ was king. On the Cross where he died a true inscription was fixed, not saying 'I am' king of the Jews, but plainly and in the languages of the world they lived in: *This is Jesus, the King of the Jews*. Nor would Pilate change the title. Perhaps he knew that Jesus had told him the truth. But Pilate had not the courage to acknowledge that he had that day seen a great light.

'My kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world,

My servants would certainly strive

That I should not be delivered to the Jews:

But now my kingdom is not from hence'.

Pilate therefore said to him: 'Art thou a king, then?'

Jesus answered: 'Thou sayest, that I am a king.

For this was I born,

And for this came I into the world;

That I should give testimony to the truth

Everyone that is of the truth, heareth my voice'.

(*John 18:36.*)

If Christ were king, then where was his kingdom? His life was now ended; the confines of it had not been made plain, for men expect kings to have kingdoms. But at least one man had understood, and he the most unlikely citizen. A voice spoke from one of the gibbets beside Jesus: 'Lord, remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom' (*Luke 23:42*). Christ's kingdom was in paradise.

Christ's kingdom is the kingdom of heaven, but it is also on this earth. In a sense it has come already, and in a sense it has not. Jesus gave us the prayer, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven', but he also said, 'Behold the kingdom of God is here, within you'. The reason why we find this confusing is that we expect a kingdom to have boundaries and customs houses, and armies and navies, police and local customs. Whereas the kingdom of Christ is the Messianic kingdom, that is to know no boundaries, that is to subjugate all peoples under its gentle yoke of peace; and all kings should be willing to submit to the 'King of kings', the 'Lord of lords'. Even after these two thousand years the idea of a spiritual kingdom still seems alien to us, unreal, unrealisable, when it is the only real one and the only one that ever could be effected. 'For the kingdom of God is not in speech, but in power' (I *Cor.* 4:20). And by power St Paul meant the life of Christ. 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you being gathered together and in my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus' (5:4). For as is stated in St John's Gospel (3:3), 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. The new birth is birth into the body of Christ, the sharing in his life and power. Consequently, as soon as a man truly believes in Christ he is in the kingdom, for as St John goes on (3:14): 'That whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but may have eternal life'.

If the kingdom of Christ may be entered into in this life, how are those who find the way in to live? Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven' (*Matt.* 7:21). The law of Christ was not to be written on slabs of stone, 'but in the fleshly tables of the heart' (II *Cor.* 3:3).

Because Christ is king, then he has a kingdom. That kingdom is our minds and our bodies; he is the ruler over our spirit and our flesh. We are citizens of the world because there is a kingdom whose extent is as extensive as the world, that kingdom is Christ's and we are members of it. Every other king is but his viceroy who must obey his law if he will claim our allegiance. We are not under two rival authorities, but one, and all the rest are delegated. All authority comes from God. It so happens that he has divided his delegation into two, one to exercise his spiritual authority, the other the material.

In St Augustine's time and in ours there is a division; there are two cities, the city of God and the city of this world. That need not be, and it only comes about because those in the city of this world do not submit to the gentle ruling of Christ. Too often there is a struggle between the spiritual and lay authorities. Both are independent of each other in their own spheres, but both subject to Christ.

There is the crux in our modern life. For long now the civil power has shaken off the royal mantle of Christ and dared to stand alone in its own power and not 'in the power of Christ'. The law of Christ is ignored in public life. There is little attempt at social justice, no recognition that Christ is at the basis of the building we call society. Christ has been hounded out of education, out of public morals, his laws flouted, divorce, abortion and vice encouraged. We, as citizens of the kingdom, as vowed followers of Christ the King by our baptism, and vowed to be Christ's soldiers by Confirmation, must make Christ reign once more.

Firstly in our own hearts, making his life our law;

Secondly in the family, making Nazareth our model,

Thirdly in society, rejoicing in the guidance of his Vicar and in the just commands of our king.

Fourthly in international affairs, where jungle rules still reign.

Thus will restoration of Christ's kingdom come; for King he is. Hail, Christ the King!

PSYCHOLOGY AND THE RELIGIOUS VOCATION

BY

'MEDICUS'

READERS of the LIFE OF THE SPIRIT have good reason to be grateful to Père M. J. Nicolas, O.P. for his fine exposition of 'The True Basis of Religious Life'. At the beginning of his article he raises one of the most difficult problems facing religious orders at the present day. He is acutely conscious of the difficulties that modern temperaments have in adapting themselves to the traditional system of religious life with its discipline and restraints, particularly in the older and the strictly enclosed Orders. With great sympathy and frankness he recognises that these difficulties have to be faced both from the point of view of aspirants themselves and that of Superiors who try to help them.

Père Nicolas considers the problem first as one of health. Since the Editor has invited discussion, perhaps some comments may be permitted from a medical and especially a psychological point of view.

Health, in its narrowest sense, is not in question; freedom from serious bodily and mental disease is of course essential. It is rather a question of temperament, character and psycho-physical constitution.

In any group of novices there may be one or two who cause special anxiety. Apart from those who leave of their own accord or have to be told they have no vocation, there are some whose vocation seems perpetually in doubt. They vary greatly in temperament and character; some are highly strung, sensitive, proud,

strongly individual and independent in spirit, yet eager to become good religious. They tend to alternate between elation and depression, are easily discouraged but desperately afraid of failure. Others, more serious and solemn, take life hardly, are a prey to constant depression, worry perpetually over trifles and can never make up their minds. The constraints of religious life keep them under constant tension and they wilt under the strain. Others again do not 'mix' easily with their brethren; they seem to be in the community but not of it, in spite of genuine attempts to adapt themselves.

With these and other types there may be doubt and difficulty from the beginning. If they survive the novitiate, should they be admitted to profession? After profession they sometimes break down, but recover after a change of scene and a less restricted way of life. Later should they be allowed to take solemn vows? Some will succeed and become more or less stable, but there are extreme cases in which sheer will-power will carry such individuals on, strained almost to breaking point, for several years; they may reach final vows and even the priesthood only to become shipwrecked later on. Such final break-down is the more liable to occur in enclosed Orders of women; it may mean that a religious some years professed must, under medical advice, leave her convent and seek dispensation from her vows, with no hope of attempting any form of religious life again. After rest and treatment such persons recover and remain normal so long as they live in the world, but religious life is impossible for them. Cases like this do occur and it is not surprising if a certain uneasiness is felt and admitted.

By contrast there is the group of novices, fortunately still numerous, whose stability seems almost assured from the first. They have their difficulties but meet them with sturdy common sense. Many come from good Catholic families, others are converts to the Faith. Not necessarily robust in body, they are able to adapt themselves psychologically and become steady and stable. They make the religious life their own life; quietly and unobtrusively they carry on the routine foot-slogging work of their community and as subjects, superiors and holders of various offices they are the backbone of their Order. Many reach great holiness and perfection of charity; some few are outstanding in intellectual gifts and achievement. In religious life they are the salt of the earth.

But even such as these are sometimes conscious of strain under which they may temporarily break down. The most modern amenities do not make religious life easy and if they did it might be in danger of losing sight of its true end. The dilemma, as Père Nicolas is so well aware, is that it must maintain its character as an 'effective denudation' and at the same time be practicable for modern souls.

Can these modern difficulties be analysed more closely? Père Nicolas gives the clue: 'We must . . . face the fact that the monastic life is in profound contradiction not only to the vices of the present world but also to its mentality, its ideals and whole outlook; much more opposition is met with than formerly in those souls who give themselves to it'.

The problem may be considered as psychological, educational and spiritual.

We are all children of our time; the mark of our civilisation is the combination of materialist philosophy and astounding technical progress; this finds its ultimate logical expression in Communism. As Catholics we reject the false philosophy; technical achievements in the material order are not evil in themselves; inevitably we make use of them, they are part of the stuff of our daily lives. But psychologically we are not immune from the effects of having to live in such an atmosphere. While believing in transcendent and spiritual values we are prone to judge things from the standpoint of the materialist, to appraise them for their technical perfection or practical utility rather than their intrinsic or ultimate worth. By adopting empiric standards we become impatient of authority and tradition; we tend to despise earlier ages as inferior and to assume that what is new is better than what is old, as if, as G. K. Chesterton says somewhere, what is done on Wednesday must be better than what was done on Tuesday. Ends and means become confused and means exalted into ends; technical perfection is invested with almost a moral value. We do not exactly worship efficiency but may tend to think and act as though it were a moral virtue. Even in religious matters this may be apparent; perfection in liturgical ceremonies and rendering of plain-chant is very desirable but it can easily be thought of as an end in itself and any lack of it criticised as almost a moral fault. Utility can become the criterion of any course of action; accuracy and precision are so obviously necessary for good work that they may seem all-important; we come to expect them, almost as a right, in everything, from medical and surgical treatment down to typewriters, spectacles and artificial teeth. In the religious state there must be a reversal of values, life must be ordered to spiritual ends; the novice, however spiritually minded, is apt to feel his world has turned upside down; he has to learn that the mere usefulness of an action is no longer a compelling reason for being allowed to carry it out. Even the renunciation of small amenities may be felt at first as in a sense a lowering of standards.

Owing to the increased slavery of modern life, and the lack of creative activity, we cling to our little freedoms, to the free use of our leisure to do what we will and go where we will. It is a true instinct that prompts the Christian to escape this slavery, to offer his life instead to him whose service is perfect freedom, but the adjustment needs more than a change of heart; the

activity of mind and body has been conditioned by the world he has been brought up in, and constraint of either or both as in religious life can be felt as an intolerable strain.

Education is no less implicated; it has become more and more technical. Catholic schools have to equip their pupils for worldly careers; only a small proportion will enter religious life or the priesthood. Religious teaching and character training may be excellent but the influence of secular ideals and outlook is bound to make itself felt. Modern education—except under Nazism and Communism—tends to encourage initiative, independence of thought, frank directness of speech and manner, an individualist outlook that accepts little on authority or tradition, seeks rather to prove by trial and error and is impatient to experiment with life. Such soil can and does breed saints, but their growth may be slow and difficult and adaptation to the traditional ways of religious life is far harder than formerly. Such independence of spirit is not lightly to be condemned; it may well be a reaction against the levelling down of human society to the uniformity of the herd or the hive that threatens us more and more as our civilization declines. Under Divine Providence such characters can be the stuff of saints and martyrs and may save the world.

Home influences are even more important. A good Catholic family, especially if it is large, can be an oasis in a desert of unbelief. In such families there can sometimes be effected a synthesis or at least a *modus vivendi* between Catholic principles and the modern practical outlook. They are the more likely to send sons and daughters to be the upholders of religious life in the future.

Père Nicolas's solution of these problems must commend itself for its breadth of vision and its charity. The Church today is very much alive to the needs of modern souls and may perhaps allow some mitigation of the more rigid enactments and observances in some Orders; not so much, it is to be hoped, a mitigation of *Rule* as an adaptation in accordance with the modern outlook of practical common sense.

Spiritual problems are bound up with those of mind and body. In any large group of those seeking to enter religious life there may be one or more whose spiritual life has entered upon a distinct phase. Active mental prayer has given place to passive contemplation. By no merit, choice or effort of their own they have been brought by God to enter and pass through the 'Night of Sense' described by that great psychologist St John of the Cross as 'the entrance and beginning of contemplation'.¹ Such souls are likely to be less rare among aspirants to religious life, especially those no longer very young, than among the laity in general.

Contemplative experience is a fact, as much so in the 20th cen-

1 *Dark Night of the Soul*, Book II, Ch. 2, *Works of St John of the Cross*, Eng. Trans. by E. Allison Peers, Vol. I, p. 400.

tury as in the time of St Teresa and St John of the Cross. It is not a product of neurosis or hysteria; this is recognized by Catholic psychologists such as Allers: 'It seems altogether mistaken to interpret the "night of the soul" and similar phenomena in terms of neurosis or of purely natural categories'.² But great caution is necessary in deciding that it is genuine in any individual as the risk of delusion is grave. In some cases it may develop comparatively early in the spiritual life; it is not holiness, though a powerful means towards it; 'a non-contemplative soul may have more charity than others who are contemplative'.³

Psychologically it presents problems of its own. Contemplative prayer involves consciousness of God's action upon the soul. As de la Taille puts it: 'Charity in the case of the mystic is not only infused but consciously infused'.⁴ And again: 'The soul knows and feels itself invested with this love by God'.⁵

From a psychological point of view the change-over from meditation to this consciousness of God's action during prayer is bound to make a profound difference to the individual, and since soul and body are one the effects are really psycho-physical. As contemplation develops it may tend to become habitual, and quite apart from special phenomena such as raptures and ecstasies, it may then be felt as a psycho-physical state which can become more or less continuous even outside set times of prayer. Much has been written on mystical phenomena mainly by clerical authors, but so far this state itself has been but little studied from the modern psychological approach. Obviously the difficulties would be great.

Contemplation if already granted to a soul will naturally influence its vocation; some such souls, especially if quite young, may be able to enter an Order, not necessarily a contemplative one. Others find their vocation in married or celibate life in the world or in the secular priesthood. For a very few a solution is more difficult; their whole bent is towards prayer but temperament or their psycho-physical state makes them unfitted for community life; they seem to need more freedom and it is possible that their real vocation is to a life of comparative solitude. The outstanding modern example is Charles de Foucauld. After 5 years as a Trappist, and a model of humility and obedience, he was told that monastic life was not his vocation. Ordained a secular priest he spent the rest of his life as a hermit-missionary in the Sahara, a life of solitude, almost continuous prayer and terrifying austerity.

His is an extreme case and such a vocation must be very rare. But Fr Conrad Pepler, O.P., points out⁶ that in the 14th century,

² Rudolf Allers: *The Psychology of Character*, Eng. Trans. by E. B. Strauss, New Impression 1943, p. 327.

³ de la Taille, S.J.: *Contemplative Prayer*, Eng. Trans. by a Tertiary of the Order of Mount Carmel, 1929, p. 12.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 12.

⁵ *ibid.* p. 13.

⁶ *Life of the Spirit*, Aug. 1946, pp. 44-47.

a period of turbulence and decline, a great host of mystics poured out a flood of mystical writings all over Europe, and he draws a close parallel between that century and our own age. Moreover, not a few of these mystics, for example Mother Julian and Richard Rolle, were anchoresses or solitaries. It does not then seem impossible that the vocation to solitude may revive even in these times, however unfavourable they may appear. To quote Fr Pepler: 'What we look for today are St Catherines, Mother Julians, Walter Hiltons to give purpose and form to the mystical unrest in men's souls'.

Modern spirituality tends to be simple and direct and is eager to go straight to the heart of things. It seeks to return to a theocentric and Christocentric outlook, to leave the hot-house of intensive spiritual self-culture for the keen air of the mountains where God dwells in secret. Elaborate methods are put aside; it would avoid continual self-regard, the digging up as it were of the seeds of virtue to see if they are sprouting. In the natural order too this is sound psychology. In character-training 'many goals—including the ideal of perfection—are unattainable if directly striven for. Rather does perfection come to him who does not seek it (and is thus not self-seeking) but seeks that which is perfect'.⁷

Contemplation would seem to be in full accord with this attitude. The prayer of the contemplative is a simple looking-forth towards God and conscious communion with him, without distinct images or concepts and without regard of self.

In conclusion, perhaps a doctor may be allowed to refer to a subject not strictly relevant but which may have a bearing on the future development of religious life. A second world war has left a host of maimed, lame and blind and of others in some way disabled. There are those too whom accident or disease has left crippled or deformed. Children are growing up with bodies mutilated in air raids, road accidents and from other causes. Sound perhaps in constitution and often strong in spirit, many of these will reach the normal span of life. Nowadays they do not seek pity or mere charitable support; they ask to support themselves, to be as independent and 'normal' as possible, to share the burdens of active life as far as they can. Must such as these be for ever debarred from any form of religious life? For many of course ordinary religious life is impossible. In these days the Church has shown herself favourable to many innovations to meet the needs of souls; may we not hope that in due time she may allow people thus handicapped to form religious associations adapted to their special circumstances? They might well be joined by others, whole in body, who feel called to a similar form of life combined with service of their less fortunate brethren. Apart from contemplative ideals, such organizations could find scope for active work, as for

7 Allers, *op. cit.* p. 204.

instance in the education and training of those similarly handicapped.

Already the Church allows some opportunities to the disabled; a man with an artificial leg can be ordained a priest; if a priest becomes blind he may be given permission to say Mass and can preach and hear confessions. Today the blind can receive a first-class education; might not a man blind from childhood some day be allowed to reach the priesthood? A number have already been successful and distinguished in the Anglican ministry.

Religious associations of the kind suggested would be an eloquent protest against the materialism of the time. The word 'rehabilitation' is often used nowadays; to restore the sick and injured as far as possible to health and activity is a good Christian work, but too often now there is the implication of making the sufferer self-supporting so that he may not be a burden upon the State. For the materialist the corollary of rehabilitation is euthanasia; if the disabled cannot be made fit enough to look after themselves and to work, the modern pagan state would prefer to see them painlessly killed. To Christians it is left to show that in this world the life of the spirit can triumph over bodily infirmity, so that at the last day the body, gloriously risen and once more perfect, may be re-united to the soul in life everlasting.

HOURS WITH ST JEROME

By

HUGH POPE, O.P., S.T.M., D.S.S.

THOUGH perhaps most people who are at all familiar with them appreciate the writings of St Augustine, comparatively few feel any attraction for those of St Jerome who, unlike St Augustine, has left us no sermons or devotional treatises, his work consisting for the most part of technical Commentaries and minute disquisitions on difficult passages of Holy Scripture.

Both Saints have left us a vast correspondence. But how their letters differ! If we except Augustine's earlier ones, his philosophical discussions during his first days as a Christian, the remainder are for the most part the outpourings of a shepherd of souls; the same is true of his sermons which lend themselves to quotation at every turn and wherein the devout can always find food for their souls. St Jerome, too, has left us many spiritual letters. But we get the impression that such letters were not his life's work; he writes them almost under protest as though feeling that they are stealing time from the real work to which God has called him, that of translating and commenting on the Bible. This work, and the controversial work thrust upon him by the needs of the Church, procured him many enemies who slandered and calumniated him in most ungenerous fashion. He himself attacked no one save in self-defence, but when he did speak out there was no

doubt about what he meant. And though he repeatedly says that he deliberately abstains from naming his critics, he yet uses nick-names for them which only provided the thinnest of disguises.

He could, too, say harsh things; even his great admirer Cassiodorus speaks of Jerome's *mordacitas*, or biting tongue, which led a modern writer to say that Jerome was born many centuries too early and would have made an excellent editor of some 'yellow press' newspaper. But these things are by the way and do not concern us here, though it is well to point out that no one was more conscious of his failing in this respect than was Jerome himself. Nor were his friends, Marcella and Pammachius, slow to admonish him. When he remarked of certain *homunculi* who had criticised him that it was 'waste of time to sing on a harp to an ass', he wrote to Marcella: 'I know well that when you read this you will wrinkle your forehead fearing that my freedom of speech will only breed frequent quarrels, and you will itch to put your fingers on my lips' (Ep. xxvii). Pammachius, too, felt that in his attack on Jovinian he had not been too discreet (Ep. xlviii).

When pointing out grammatical errors on the part of Rufinus he says: 'I am not looking for things to criticise; it is for him to show me any which do not call for criticism' (*Adv. Rufinum* i. 17). His hatred for heretics and their doctrines leads him to speak of Arius as that *daemonium meridianum* (*Adv. Rufinum* ii 17). Nor can he resist an opportunity of making bad puns on some unhappy adversary's name: Vigilantius becomes of course 'Dormitantius'. A Scotsman, too, may well feel aggrieved at Jerome's awful indictment of his nation. He may, however, draw comfort from the fact that Jerome regarded British and Scotch peoples as one and the same! But perhaps that only aggravates the insult! But these blemishes, if we may so call them, must not blind us to the deep spirituality of the Hermit of Bethlehem, who was not only the profoundest of scholars but one of the greatest of saints; one too, who, like his contemporary St Augustine, trained an army of saints and scholars to carry on his work.

The passages which are given here, most of them very brief, are of the nature of *obiter dicta*—flashes, as it were, lighting up his Commentaries and affording, unconsciously on the writer's part, relief from what is often almost too solid reading; part of their charm lies in their wholly unexpected character.

Few perhaps have the chance of consulting the original which, owing to Jerome's condensed style and his determination never to waste words, is exceedingly difficult to translate. But in translating I have tried to act on the principle Jerome himself lays down: 'I emphatically assert that in translating Greek authors I have not—save in the case of Holy Scripture where the very order of the words is itself a sacrament (*mysterium*)—translated word for word but meaning for meaning, or, as Horace, *Ars poetica*, expresses it, "Non verbum verbo curabis reddere, fidus interpres".'

The following extracts may, it is hoped, serve to show the hermit, the scholar, the controversialist and the translator as he really was. They may, too, induce some readers to turn to the original and read at least his inimitable letters.

ST JEROME

1. TRUTH

Whilst we are living in this frail vessel of the body we imagine that the zeal exhibited for us by such as love us is a help, and that our enemies' assaults do us harm. But when this dust shall have returned to the dust whence it came, and when pallid death shall have withdrawn from this present scene not alone us who write but those who pour scorn on our writings, when another generation shall be in possession and fresh trees shall have replaced those that have fallen, then it will no longer be question of names of high repute but only of the quality of the work; no one intending to read the book will trouble to ask the author's name; his sole concern will be the value of the work he is sitting down to read. He will not ask whether the writer was a bishop or a layman, an emperor or a squire, soldier or servant, whether he was clothed in purple or in silk or in the cheapest rags; nor will he be impressed by any title the writer may possess, but solely by the quality of his work (*Prologue to Bk. II on Osee*).

Though an ascetic life is of great value, and continence of more importance than bodily mortification, yet nothing is so mortifying as knowledge of the truth (*on Nahum ii. 1*).

2. PURGATORY

The Seraphim who ever stand before the throne of God to praise him, are also sent on divers missions, more especially to those who need purification, and, who, for the sins of their former life, to meet you with bands of virgins in her train! (*Ep. xxii. 41*).

3. HEAVEN

Stand for a moment outside the prison of your body and try to picture the reward for your toils here, a reward which 'eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man'. What a day that will be when Mary the Lord's Mother comes to meet you with bands of virgins in her train! (*Ep. xxii, 41*).

4. HOLINESS

What a difference there is between a holy simplicity and a learned holiness (*Ep. liii. 3*). Some mistake a crass simplicity for sanctity, and therefore proclaim themselves disciples of the fishermen; as though they were holy simply because ignorant! (*Ep. xxvii. 1*).

5. ASS AND HARP

It is a thankless task to play on the harp to an ass (*Ep. xxvii. 1*).

6. WRITERS AND READERS

No writer so unskilled that he cannot find a reader equally so (*Prol. to Bk. xii on Isaias*).

Men write books, and then have to leave them to the mercy of critical readers (*on Eccles. iv*).

Apologising for his youthful attempt at a Commentary on Abdias, a copy of which he came across in Italy, he says: 'I confess I was amazed to find that no matter how badly a person wrote he could always find some reader as bad as himself' (*Prol. to Com. on Abdias*).

7. MODERN CRITICS

I am aware that former ecclesiastical writers, Greeks as well as Latins, have said much about this *Book of Jonas* and, by the questions they have ventilated, have not brought out, but rather have obscured, its meaning. So much is this the case that their interpretation of it calls itself for an interpreter, and the reader lays the work down more bewildered than he was before he read it (*Prologue to Commentary on Jonas*). Jonas himself is styled by Jerome 'animosus Propheta', that 'fearless Prophet' (*Ep. xxxix 3*).

8. NATIVITY

The saints can grasp the mystery of Christ's Nativity rather by believing it than by trying to express it in words (*on Isa. liii*).

8. PLEASURE SEEKERS

Men who live for pleasure fail to arrive, by a study of created things, at a knowledge of the Creator, nor do they consider the works of his hands (*on Isa. v*).

10. THE CREATOR

To whom shall we liken God when we reflect on his power and his majesty? Should we not rather arrive at some understanding of the Creator from the marvels he has wrought? (*on Isaias xl*).

11. PURGATORY

A man's work may have been burned and thus perished in that fire, and all his labour prove wasted; yet while it is true that he has forfeited the reward of his toil, he himself will be saved, though at the cost of being purified by fire. But that man whose work has survived will be saved without having to undergo that purification. Salvation surely differs in their respective cases (*Adv. Jovinianum ii. 22*).

12. GOD IS PRESENT IN OUR SOULS

There is no place where God is not present. To all, especially to such as are holy, he draws nigh; even so closely as the clothes cling to our bodies (*on Jeremias xxiii. 24*).

13. WISDOM

A man who is himself wise has the best right to be called happy; next to him is he who listens to a wise man (*quoted from Hesiod*). Jerome adds: But he who is neither the one nor the other is of no use to himself nor to anyone else (*on Isa. iii. 3*).

14. MARTYRS

All the martyrs, then, those saints who have shed their blood

for Christ's sake, those too whose whole life has been a martyrdom, whose bodies now lie in the dust, shall all rise and praise God their Creator (*on Isa. xxvi. 19*).

15. THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

So long as we are in this present world and have been brought out of Egypt, we ascend by degrees, passing first of all through desert and uninhabitable stretches where no holy man ought to be; it is a pathless land, and that makes our journey difficult. It is a thirsty land too wherein we are ever yearning for better things and never content with the present; a land of fanciful images, of 'the shadow of death', a place where we are always in danger and wherein the devil is ever laying snares for us, a land, finally, 'wherein no man sojourns' who has arrived at the fullness of his age in Christ. For we shall all rise unto the perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of age in Christ. No one who is a man of God, nor indeed any son of man, permanently abides in this land but is for ever hastening on to better things. It is clear, then, that there is no such thing as perfection so long as we are on the way, but only in the goal to which the way leads, in those mansions prepared in heaven for the saints (*on Jeremias ii. 6*).

16. LAITY

It may be that the general body of the people of God is not in a position to be familiar with doctrine; this is excusable in their case, for through lack of experience of God they cannot be expected to know his behests. But the clergy, and those whose business it is to guide the laity, have known the will of the Lord and are well aware of the judgment of their God (*on Jeremias v. 4*).

17. RUFINUS

Rufinus, dumb himself, barks with the bark of that great, fat dog of Albion (Pelagius) who is better able to fight with his heels than with his teeth. For he derives his ancestry from the people of Scotland, near to Britain (*Prologue to Book III on Jeremias*).

REVIEWS

BISHOP CHALLONER. By Denis Gwynn, D.Litt., F.R.Hist.S.
(Douglas Organ; 8s. 6d.)

The recent translation of Bishop Challoner's remains from a quiet Berkshire churchyard to a chapel in Westminster Cathedral, has called for a new and serviceable biography of the great bishop. The book under review, of modest compass and written in popular style by a well-known and gifted layman, will adequately supply this need, and will satisfy the re-awakened interest of English Catholics in the most venerated of their eighteenth century prelates. Many to whom Richard Challoner has hitherto been hardly more than a name will, on reading these pages, come to understand why there has arisen among us a widespread desire to see him raised to the altars of the Church. His personality lighted up the dark, dangerous and depressing penal days; and he was the leader and the inspiration of our fathers in the faith, alike by the pre-eminent holiness of his life and by the fact that he was the writer of those devotional works on which subsequent generations of Catholics founded their spiritual lives.

We are hopeful that Denis Gwynn's work will cause many of his readers to seek for fuller information in the two volumes of Canon Burton's *Life and Times of Bishop Challoner*, one of the finest and most satisfactory of biographies, but alas! long out of print, yet to be found accessible on the shelves of most of our larger public reference libraries.

R. B.

RICHARD CHALLONER 1691-1781, a great Bishop of the Eighteenth Century. (Burns Oates; 3s. 6d.)

This booklet is produced by the Westminster Cathedral Chronicle. Its format is quite perfect—an attractive wrapper, fifty-six pages of double-columned letterpress, sixteen interesting illustrations, and a coloured frontispiece successfully reproducing the well-known portrait of Bishop Challoner preserved at St Edmund's College, Ware. A brief Preface by Cardinal Griffin ushers in a series of essays by such well-known experts as Bishop Matthew, Mgr Knox, Michael Trappes-Lomax and others, each article being in some sort a literary gem replete with learning and wit.

And the appearance of the brochure is well timed, it issued from the press just as the body of the greatest of the old Vicars-Apostolic was about to be translated from the country churchyard of Milton in Berks to the Chapel of St Gregory in Westminster Cathedral, and when a first movement is being made towards that venerable Bishop's long-overdue Canonization.

Bishop Challoner has of late years been well served by his biographers, who have made his name and life familiar to students

and scholars, but this present memorial will appeal to a wider circle, and introduce him to Catholics in general and to those to whom he hitherto has been but a name. F.R.B.

THE LIFE OF FATHER FABER. By James Cassidy, C.SS.R. (Sands; 6s. 6d.)

It is appropriate that the year following the centenary of Newman should be the occasion for publishing a compressed biography of one of the Cardinal's most apostolic friends who, like him, struggled for the Truth until It converted him to Rome. Father Cassidy gives an undramatic but accurate survey of the life of Father Faber which, like the more familiar devotional writings of the latter, provides a study of the way of perfection. This is particularly marked in the persistence of Father Faber to do the will of God at the cost of great personal suffering and frequently of considerable persecution. A. K. R.

JESUS-CHRIST, PAROLE DE DIEU. Par L.-M. Dewailly, O.P. 'Témoins de Dieu' series (Editions du Cerf).

This is a 'croquis perspectif' of the great theme of the 'Word of God' but it is to be hoped it is only the prelude to a theological treatise. The 'Word' is traced from its eternal existence in God, to its activity in the Sacraments and in the mouths of men. The essay is concerned with applications of doctrine rather than doctrine itself, but perhaps a profound examination of the Scriptural and Traditional doctrine may be expected! D. M.

A SON A PRIEST. By Mgr P. E. Hallett. (Douglas Organ; 2s. 6d.)

This is an unpretentious book and for that reason may fail to do itself justice. The problem of vocations to the priesthood confronts everyone, but Mgr Hallett writes immediately for parents though he does not exclude the boy, the seminary student or the priest himself. Throughout the book the insistence on the need for self-sacrifice is welcome for that is an unpopular doctrine. Many important details are also emphasised and three in particular stand out. First, the determining factor of a vocation is neither natural ability, though that has its place, nor some inner mystic urge, but the will of God expressed through the approbation of religious authority. That is not meant to take all the onus of decision off the shoulders of the candidate (that burden he cannot shirk anyway), but it is to make the objective fact of a call from God an inescapable thing. Second, the main purpose of a seminary is the 'moral and spiritual training' of priests. Lastly, the relation of priest to parents both during training and after ordination is clearly stated. *Obliviscere populum tuum* can easily be made the source of rootlessness and false individualism; the mutual obligations of priest and parents are more than a safeguard, they are a source of grace.

For such reasons this book is to be commended, though there are

a number of simplifications which raise questions. The joint education of clergy and laity, at least in the early stages up to the age of eighteen, has borne much fruit in England as colleges and seminaries of the north bear witness. For that reason alone it cannot be simply dismissed. When we talk today of pious children growing up in pious homes we seem to be on very unsafe ground. The distressing fact is that there are many pious parents whose children quickly become impious in spite of every natural aid to holiness. This can be attributed to the enormous seductive power of the 'world', and all that 'glamour' has done for it. But perhaps it is unfair to take the argument on to that ground. After all, the book is directed to parents and presupposes family life; but one would like to see these parents being reminded of the need for the spiritual reinforcement of their children against glamour and seduction.

The greatest pity is the format of the book. It is dull and characterless; and since this book ought to be widely read it is a pity that the mediocre dust cover does it an injustice.

GERARD MEATH, O.P.

GOD AND ROSANNE: Letters on the Contemplative Life by a Carmelite Nun. (Sands; 6s. 6d.)

This collection of 'letters' stresses several points about contemplative life and about its relation to the active life which are often overlooked. It is good, for instance, to see it stated that were the gift of self of an active religious to be incomplete, there would still be the activity to make amends, but if the contemplative fails in surrender she fails (utterly and completely) (p. 7). Difficulties are faced honestly; the possibility of life in an enclosed convent inducing hysteria is discussed and the difference between cloistered life and conditions in the world for women of the present day compared with that existing in the Middle Ages.

God and Rosanne will be helpful to those thinking seriously about contemplative religious life. The style, however, is somewhat rambling and fails to grip and the poems included are poor in quality and would have been better omitted, as would the frontispiece, which is crude and quite unworthy of the subject. But these defects should not be allowed to obscure the merits of this addition to the literature in English on the contemplative life. K.P.

THE STORY OF MOUNT MELLERAY. By the Rev. Ailbe J. Luddy, O.Cist. (Gill and Son; 5s.)

This is an enlarged edition of Father Luddy's history of the famous Irish Cistercian abbey. Its story begins in 1794, when monks from Val-Sainte came to London on their way to Canada, missed their boat, and stayed in England at the invitation and with the help of Mr Thomas Weld of Lulworth. There they settled, and built St Susan's monastery, which became an abbey in 1813. But later, as a result of Protestant hostility, Lord Sidmouth forbade

them to receive British subjects into the noviciate, and in 1817 the community migrated to Brittany. The French Melleray flourished until, in 1831, the monks were evicted by force. Many were Irish, and they founded Mount Melleray. Later, English religious from the French house founded Mount St Bernard in Leicestershire. The beginnings of Mount Melleray were characteristically Cistercian, almost impossibly harsh and discouraging; perhaps none but monks would have succeeded in establishing themselves, few but monks would even have tried. This book is the history of their achievement. A short introduction outlines the history of the Order, and there are a number of illustrations and a map showing the Cistercian houses in Ireland.

A. E. H. SWINSTEAD.

DEFENSE DE DIEU. By Stanislas Fumet. (De la Baconiere, Suisse.)

This book is described by the author as a series of meditations. They were written immediately before and during the late war and seek to emphasize the lessons to be drawn from that tragic series of events as they affected France. Thus we have *Noel de Guerre*, *L'homme de la Resurrection*, *Amour Sacré de la Patrie*, etc. Everywhere great truths are stated with fervent eloquence and in a penetrating style. Even before the tragedy and betrayal of the 'true' France had begun, Fumet's mind was full of misgivings when he compared man's profound, essential need of God with his cold rejection of what alone could satisfy that need and he justly emphasizes that redeemed man, when he falls, does not merely crash upon the earth and resume his 'natural' place but becomes the prey of a whole underworld of evil beings and is given over to those malignant forces which he had been so well equipped to conquer. He lies prone, undone, looking into even deeper depths of degradation, slipping into them, man no more. His intellect becomes so perverted that he no longer distinguishes clearly good from evil or justice from injustice. Whatever is able to give him what he happens to desire is held as good, whatever frustrates him is evil. Relativity reigns supreme. And 'quand la vérité s'efface, la beauté se met à grimacer' (p. 69). Art is deformed. Fallen lower still, he comes to say 'acheronta movebo' and turns to an only slightly disguised diabolism. There is but one remedy—Christ's plentiful redemption.

We think, however, that the French tendency to lyricism has at times led the author to make unsound statements. P.Q.

THE ALTAR AND THE WORLD: A book for those who wish to bridge the gulf between Worship and Social Action. By Bernard Iddings Bell. (Dobson; 5s.)

The aim and theme of this book is explained by its sub-title. In the Church and also among many non-Catholic bodies there is a growing discontent with the divorce (largely due to Luther) between religion, viewed as purely subjective, and man's daily life. Liturgy

is coming back again as the consecration and inspiration of the daily grind.

Among Anglicans this was set out not very long ago in a remarkable book—*Liturgy and Society* by Fr Hebert. *The Altar and the World*—also by an Anglican—is on more practical and less scholarly lines than Fr Hebert's book; it is also rather more topical.

Though its *principles* will hold for all who accept the Christian Revelation, its immediate value for Catholics cannot be great.

The author takes the Communion Service of the American Episcopal Church and shows the application of various parts (some of which have no equivalent in our Rite) to the problems and needs which face the world today: 'It is not only as individuals that we have failed. . . . This cry, 'Lord have mercy', has a basic place in patriotic considerations. We were given our countries in which to preserve nurturing fatherlands; we have had responsibility to create and develop English-speaking nations in which under God there might be for all men life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. How sadly short of the hope of our fathers is the achievement of us, their children!' (p. 16). One other quotation may be made: 'To call us from a wounding over-occupation with what we do not pause to understand, with a world which for all our good desire we keep thrusting ever deeper into Hell—to call us from all this to contemplation of Reality, the Church provides that in the midst of the Liturgy we shall receive a dramatic summons to disentangle ourselves from the net of accidental circumstance and fix our attention on immutable purpose—to dwell, for at least a moment or two, in Heaven and in God' (VIII: *The Sanctus*, p. 45). Perhaps the explanation of the value of prayer (*The Great Intercession*, p. 37) might have been completed, according to Catholic teaching, by the principle that God answers prayer when he sees fit—or rather, *how* he sees fit—because he has moved us to ask for that for which he sees we should ask; a mystery indeed, but implied in the Pauline expression—'fellow workers with God'.

Thus, although there is nothing essentially new here, and the value of the book for Catholics will be limited by its very nature, its outspoken indictments and its applications of the Liturgy to the burning questions of the hour will recommend it to readers.

DOM WULSTAN HIBBERD, O.S.B.

HOW TO PRAY THE MASS. By Fr James, O.F.M. Cap. (Cork: Mercier Press; 1s.)

Fr James provides a simple, but thorough, commentary on the Mass, aided by unpretentious illustrations of its chief moments. Eager to assist the faithful towards that 'active participation in the holy mysteries and in the public and solemn prayer of the Church' which Pope Pius X commended, Fr James does not attempt too much: he knows his readers and their habits of worship. But his

little book should do much to draw ordinary folk to 'pray the Mass', and it is to be warmly welcomed. I.E.

BENEDICTIONALE, with prayers used in Public Devotions, edited by Ven. Archdeacon M. S. MacMahon, P.P., V.F. (Dublin: Gill, 15s.)

Messrs Gill have already, with their new edition of the *Rituale*, set an excellent standard of ecclesiastical typography. The *Benedictionale*, authorised for use in Ireland, has the same dignity of format and distinction of printing. It is a matter for congratulation that the service-books of the Church are now being given the beauty that is proper to their use. Useful rubrics in English provide for Solemn and Private Benediction, as well as for Exposition, of the Blessed Sacrament. I.E.

SIX O'CLOCK SAINTS. By Joan Windham, Illustrated by Mona Doneux. (Sheed & Ward; 6s.)

There is no need to re-introduce this eighth impression of probably the best series of lives of saints and other holy folk designed in the modern vein for small children, except to rejoice in the fine black type in which it has been reprinted and to commend the new illustrations; the latter are in the modern French style and (or should it be 'but'?) children will love them.

H. J. C.

STORIES ABOUT JESUS for Very Little Children. By Elizabeth Edwards. Foreword by His Eminence the late Cardinal Hinsley. (Staples Press; 3s. 6d.)

These are happily not stories written for children; they are stories told by a mother at bed-time to her small son, only very slightly doctored (I think) for publication. This is the best way of all for children to learn the Gospel story, but not every mother will have the gift of vivid, realistic story-telling that this mother has in a very marked degree. Both they, and all those who have the precious duty of instructing children, will welcome this book with eagerness and perhaps with relief. The history of the Incarnation is set forth in twenty stories wherein legitimate imaginative details are introduced to make the narrative live for the child. The majority of them were told to 'John Martin' when he was four and a half; but 'because he liked to hear the same story over and over again', those relating the Passion and Death of our Lord were not told 'until he was a good deal older'. Cardinal Hinsley declares that 'they are an inspiration to an old time-worn disciple in a dark world'. And the reviewer himself found that half a century of years was not proof against their appeal.

H. J. C.

ART NOTES

25, EBURY STREET, LONDON, S.W.1

We Fight Against:

- 1 Ignorance of art among the educated.
- 2 Anti-God movements in art circles.
- 3 Chocolate box art in churches.

We Stand For:

- 1 A better understanding between patron and artists.
- 2 The social and religious importance of art.
- 3 An art representative of our age.

Quarterly, 1/6 (plus postage). **Yearly, 6/-** (post free).

RECENT ARTICLES INCLUDE:

'Georges Rouault', by Robert Speaight; 'The Christmas Crib', by Nesta de Robeck; 'Beauty is Objective', by E. I. Watkin; 'Alan Durst and Roy de Maistre', by I. McLean; 'American Commentary', by Maurice Lavanoux; 'Church Planning', by Ifor Hael; 'The Decoration of a Baptistry', by Joan Morris; 'The Making of Art', by G. Vann, O.P.

Blackfriars Publications

Blackfriars, Oxford

VEZELAY

FR GERALD VANN'S Address to the departing pilgrims on Saturday June 29th 1946, is published under the title

**"LET THERE
BE LIGHT"**

2d Per Copy

Blackfriars, St Giles, Oxford

— London's Greatest —

Catholic Book Centre

NEW & SECOND-HAND
BOOKS

LENDING LIBRARY
READING ROOM

Read Duckett's Register.
The new Catholic Literary
Monthly. 3d. per copy; 4/-
per annum, post free

Visit our Extensive Showrooms
where you can Browse or Buy

Duckett

140 STRAND, W.C.2

Phone: TEMple Bar 3008

Telegrams:

Gallows, Estrand, London

BLACKFRIARS PUBLICATIONS

THE printing and the binding trades are suffering severe post-war trials, so that the promises made by publishers are not always able to be fulfilled in the time specified. But we hope to publish before Christmas some of the following:

- ¶ *Eve and the Gryphon*, by Gerald Vann, O.P.; 5s.
A study of the Christian woman's place in the world, her way of following Christ.
- ¶ *Whatsoever He Shall Say*, by Ferdinand Valentine, O.P.; 5s. Letters to one beginning the life of prayer in ordinary every-day circumstances.
- ¶ *An Old Apostle Speaks*, by Vincent McNabb, O.P. 1s. 6d. Sermons and addresses including his autobiographical address at his Golden Jubilee. With a Memoir of Fr Vincent by Gerald Vann, O.P.
- ¶ *The Condemnation of St Thomas at Oxford*, by Daniel Callus, O.P., D.Ph., etc.: The Aquinas Paper No. 5. 1s.
- ¶ *Christian Philosophy and the Common Law*, by Richard O'Sullivan, K.C. The Aquinas Paper No. 6.
- ¶ *Dartford Priory: The History of the English Dominicanesses by a nun of All Souls Priory, Headington.* 2s.

Also in preparation are two more series of Ferdinand Valentine's Letters, an illustrated account of the Vezelay Pilgrimage, the translation of a popular brochure on Christian Marriage by Père Carré, O.P., the biography of St Albert the Great by Sr M. Albert, O.P. and a fair number of other Dominican biographies.

For Book List, Subscription List and all other information write to

BLACKFRIARS, ST GILES, OXFORD